

## The Virginia Citizen.

DEMOCRATIC WEEKLY.

TERMS: \$1.00 per year in advance.

W. McDONALD LEE, EDITOR.

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All communications or business letters should be addressed to THE VIRGINIA CITIZEN, Irvington, Va., to receive prompt attention.

Friday, February 13, 1903.

VERY TRUE.  
 Quoting our recent editorial in favor of shortening the oyster season the *Southside Sentinel*, of Urbana, adds this endorsement:

"Our contemporary's conclusion is shared extensively, we think, and the *Sentinel* can but feel that the interests of all classes—oystermen and farmers—would be promoted by taking off both September and April. However, we observe from the action of those who have recently assembled in mass-meeting at several places in Middlesex to consider questions pertaining to the oyster industry, that there is very considerable opposition to the taking off of September, only upon the ground, so far as we can gather, that the weather during that month is the most favorable of the year for oystering. We do not profess to have much practical knowledge of the oyster industry, but from what we have seen and heard of it in recent years we are forced to agree with the *CITIZEN* that to take off September and April both from the oyster season would help that industry and greatly promote our agricultural interests."

No step taken in oyster matters would find unanimous endorsement, and it is not to be supposed that any so important one as shortening the season would be free of criticism. We are firmly convinced, however, that the opposition to it is not a majority sentiment. Equally true—and very fortunate—no particular class as a unit opposes or favors the proposition. Tongmen and planters are to be found on both sides. But we are just as firmly convinced that no move could be made that would rebound to so much good to oyster interests as the taking off September and April would.

There seems to be little objection to dropping April, the main objection being to leaving off September. It is in this latter month that the oyster suffers most, and oystermen do not begin to derive a benefit anything like equal to the damage done. The young oyster has hardly set before he is grappled with, and his thin, papery shell roughly detached from the parent shell or other object. A large percentage of them are thus destroyed.

Again, the price of oysters is "way down" during September and the oysters then taken would be larger and bring a better price if left for the October catch.

A most important reason, though, why September should be excluded is that the larger part of the tongmen, particularly early in the season, is composed of negroes that have flocked to the shores from the interior. After the middle of August it is a practical impossibility for farmers to procure this class of labor—and at its most important season. So a two-fold injury is done the material interests of our Tidewater country by an early opening of the oyster season—the oyster is more materially damaged in the early fall than at any other time, and the farming interests are fearfully handicapped. In fact, our agricultural industry has almost become a nonentity, hardly more than a name.

We are fully aware that in advancing such views we tread upon the toes of some planters who rely upon the cheap market of September to lay in their winter stock, and upon the coras of some tongmen who work only for what is in sight, little caring what betides the future. But a calm, dispassionate view of the situation, from a vantage ground that we hold—being in the hot-bed of both tonging and planting industries—incites us to beg the Legislature to eliminate both September and April from the tonging season. It might be well for that body to bear in mind that it is but a reasonable supposition that the gentlemen who appear before it in opposition to cutting off September are spurred on by personal interests, as recited above, and that the men who are not directly engaged in the business, but who may have a good command of the situation and view it to the joint benefit of both our land and water interests, with no axe to grind, are in better position to judge of the "weal" and the "woe." There is hardly sufficient incentive for these latter to appear, at expense, before our legislative committees.

We reiterate that no step taken by the Legislature could result in more good to the oyster industry—to say nothing of the agricultural—than would be that of cutting off September from the oyster season.

## SAVE THE YOUNG SEED.

A visitor to the great coal-fields of Pennsylvania will be struck by eight of the vast culm piles which loom up at every coal breaker. They are the refuse slate and scraps of coal that are run from the breakers by cars, and form vast waste dumps. Their presence is becoming a serious question, very much like our sawdust piles at great mills. In winter the tramp snugly sleeps at their base, for nearly all of the piles have some portion that is a smoldering mass (no smoke, but a slow and intense glow), ignited by combustion. In the day they are scenes of busy pickers, boys and girls sorting out the minute particles of coal, for which they find a ready market. In this way many dollars are put in the pockets of the poor—dollars that would not otherwise be procured—and a material resource uncovered.

Looking over the big piles of oyster shells that loom up at every point on the Rappahannock where the shucking business is engaged in they seem to afford a parallel case to that of the culm piles—so far as a certain waste is concerned. Many bushels of young oysters, attached to the shells, are dumped on these piles to die. By the time the shells are planted there is not a vestige of life in any of the young spat. It does seem wanton waste in this case, but how to avoid it without great expense has not yet been discovered. Or at least none of the packers have taken time to consider the question. Like the refuse coal in the eyes of the operators, it is a very small item, indeed.

It seems to us that in the case of the oyster the waste is more deplorable than in the coal. This young seed, if thrown overboard, would in two years net three-hundred fold, at the lowest. Knowing this, would it not be worth the while of the owners to consider how it might be saved? There is a way—the way of the culm-pickers. The only obstacle is in getting the boys and girls to pick the piles over. Emulation of the thrift of the miners' children would not be unworthy of our youth. While we have no such poor with us as have the miners, yet our people are a laboring people and they should not be loth to allow their children to make an honest living. Two or three children on every shell pile could sort out and pick up from three to five bushels each of the young oysters in a day; these would be worth 15 or 20 cents a bushel to the owners of the pile—and they would doubtless be glad to pay it. A triple object would in this way be achieved—the young seed preserved and the now diminishing oyster supply increased, a profit to the young that might not otherwise be gained, and a market to the seed buyer, who is always on the lookout for "snaps." Can't some of our energetic but busy shuckers take a little time to consider this thing and make the experiment?

The Virginia newspaper contingent—125 strong—turned up in Florida Tuesday morning, sober. We are thankful for that. It tends to prove to the Floridians the truth of the *Times-Dispatch's* assurance that the invasion would be "pacific." The trip to the oyster farm later, where some of them got kicked—presumably in trying to ride the birds—again arouses our doubts.

DOINGS IN CONGRESS.  
 Democrats defeated an effort on the part of the Republicans to have the House vote on Sunday.

The House passed the bill against trusts by a unanimous vote. The Republicans voted down a number of amendments by which the Democrats sought to make the bill more effective.

Owing to the conservative course of Senator Martin Mr. Willman will probably succeed in defeating the appointment of Dr. Crum, the negro, for Collector of Charleston port. The committee refused to confirm the President's nomination of Crum.

Every one in this State will learn, with deep regret, of the illness of Congressman Swanson, one of our brightest and best representatives in Washington. We trust that his recovery may be speedy and that he may yet have many years of life.—*Fredricksburg Free Lance.*

WEDDINGS.  
 A marriage license was issued in Baltimore on Thursday of last week to William M. Powell and Macrina E. Ashburn, both of Redville.

Mr. Frederick Moring and Miss Mary Mothershead, of Lyells, were united in the bonds of matrimony the past week, Rev. W. W. Walker performing the ceremony.

SMITH-EDWARDS—Miss Fannie B. Edwards and Mr. Jeter E. Smith were married at the home of the bride near Edwardsville, Northumberland county, on Tuesday, Rev. E. F. Garner officiating. The bride is a popular young lady of the county, while the groom is a prominent citizen.

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